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Germany and the Reorganization of the League Council

THE organization of the Council and the admission of Germany are two problems which unless successfully handled at the forthcoming meeting of the League of Nations Assembly, to be held in Geneva on September 6, may result in a serious setback to the Geneva organization and to Europe as a whole. Not until Germany has entered the League can the Locarno agreements come into effect. Any added delay jeopardizes not only the security and political stability of the Continent, but the prestige of the League as well. The fiasco of last March, when Germany, demanding that she alone be added to the Council as a permanent member, waited futilely on the doorstep of the League while the Great Powers sought to adjust their differences behind closed doors, is still fresh in the minds of the principal chancelleries of Europe. A repetition this month, it is generally conceded, would have disastrous consequences.

The situation has altered since last March, but it remains critical nevertheless. Of the three nations whose claims for Council positions were primarily responsible for

blocking the entry of Germany, Poland has passed through a revolution which has weakened the basis of her case. Brazil has resigned from the Council and has given notice of her intention to withdraw from the League. The third, Spain, threatened to withdraw from the June meeting of the Council and at the last moment a Spanish representative attended only "out of loyalty to the League." Brazil has formally notified the League that she will not attend the next Assembly or the Council, but Spain has announced her intention to send a representative to Geneva, and requested (August 5) that a date be fixed for a meeting of the Committee on the Composition of the Council at which final recommendations would be prepared for the Council and the Assembly.

The greatest anxiety is caused, not by the attitude of Brazil or Poland, but by that of Spain who is maintaining her intransigent attitude. The Spanish Ambassador in London is reported to have hinted recently that Spain will insist on a permanent Council seat and if not given satisfaction that she will withdraw from the League. The

fact that Great Britain has obviously been compelled to withdraw her support of the Spanish claim to a seat on the Council, first promised as early as 1921, has apparently not weakened Madrid's uncompromising position.

CECIL PLAN FOR COUNCIL REORGANIZATION

A plan on which several League powers pin their hopes for securing Germany's entry into the League was drawn up, largely through the initiative of Lord Cecil, at the first session of the Committee on the Composition of the Council, beginning May 10. This plan provides for the creation of nine non-permanent Council seats—three more than the present number. Three members are to retire each year and are to become ineligible for a period of three years, but by a two-thirds vote of the Assembly, not more than three States may be declared reeligible for immediate election. This would in effect create three semi-permanent seats to meet the claims of Brazil, Poland and Spain. Further, the report reserves the Assembly's right to proceed to a new election of all the non-permanent members of the Council at any time it should so decide by a two-thirds vote.

What attitude the countries immediately concerned will take towards this plan is not now certain, but it is understood that Poland is inclined to accept it. If this be true, then since Brazil has withdrawn from the League Spain remains the only country likely to oppose the adoption of the plan.

The moves which will probably be taken for the adoption of what will doubtless be known as the Cecil plan are as follows: The Committee on the Composition of the Council, which failed to meet again on June 28 as scheduled, will probably, after receiving the necessary authorization, reconvene about August 30. The report of the Committee will be considered by the Council which begins its session on September 2. After the report is discussed, if it is accepted by the Council, it will then go to the Assembly which meets September 6. The Assembly under the provisions of the recently ratified amendment of Article 4 of the Covenant can then take action to reorganize the Council.

COUNCIL PROBLEM NOT A NEW ONE

The problem of the composition of the Council is not a new one. It was the subject of prolonged discussion in Paris during the drafting of the Covenant and it has occupied the attention of the League from its first session in 1920. Although it did not become an issue of international importance until the spring of 1926, when Germany's admission to the League was blocked by the aspirations of other powers, nevertheless the rivalry for seats on the Council has been keen among League members from the very first.

At the outset, two theories were advanced. One held that all states members of the League were equal as regards their rights and duties as members and that consequently all should be equally entitled to representation on the Council, and that all members of the Council should be elected by the Assembly. According to the other theory, frankly realist, only the "Great Powers," those having extensive interests and correspondingly great responsibilities, should be represented on the Council. The Covenant of the League as finally drawn up at the Paris Peace Conference represents a compromise between these two extreme views. Under Article 4 of the Covenant, "The Council shall consist of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers (United States of America, British Empire, France, Italy and Japan) together with representatives of four other Members of the League. These four Members of the League shall be selected from the Assembly from time to time in its discretion. . . ."

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION OF COUNCIL

At the time the Covenant was adopted it was taken for granted that the United States would join the League as one of its original members. It was contemplated that the permanent members, that is, the Great Powers, would outnumber the non-permanent members. This preponderance, however, would not enable the Great Powers as such to outvote the other members, as in all questions except matters of procedure, the Council's decisions must be unanimous. The proportion between the permanent and non-permanent Council